



July 31, 2009

Summer 2009

Dear Friends,

The other day I read once more an [article](#) published in Renewal Magazine in 2006 by the behavioral and developmental pediatrician Susan Johnson, M.D. entitled "Teaching Our Children to Read, Write and Spell". At the end of the article she writes:

"It is time to remove the desks from kindergartens and preschools. Our preschools and kindergartens need to fill their curriculums with play consisting of lots of sensory integration activities that will strengthen fine motor movements, visual motor abilities, balance, muscle tone, proprioception, as well as strengthen children's social and emotional development. Activities like imaginary play, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, walking the balance beam, playing circle games, singing, playing catch, doing meaningful chores, painting, coloring, playing hand-clapping games, doing string games, and finger knitting will strengthen their minds for learning. Children need these healthy, harmonious, rhythmic, and noncompetitive movements to develop their brains. For it is the movements of their body that create the pathways in their mind for reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, and creative thinking."

Dr. Johnson describes basically what a Waldorf Early Childhood environment is about. It would be interesting to talk with her more about the consequences of formally teaching literacy and math skills in Kindergarten and pre-K, since that is the norm nowadays. As Dorothy Ogle, our kindergarten teacher simply expressed at a parent meeting last year "There used to be a time when nearly every kindergarten classroom had a balance beam. Nowadays we are the only ones left."

In March, the Alliance for Childhood, a non-profit group that promotes policies and practices that support children's healthy development, released a report on the disappearance of play from kindergartens and calls on educators, their professional organizations, and policymakers to go back to a play-based Kindergarten curriculum. More details on that report are in the sidebar.

"In this digital flood, both enticing and destructive, Waldorf Education may prove to be a little Noah's Ark for the interests, skills, and activities which for centuries were assumed to be basic to the human experience"

- Ronald E. Koetzsch, Ph.D.
Editor of Renewal Journal
(Spring/Summer 2008)

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Calendar

First Day of the 2009-10
School Year
Wednesday, Sept. 9th, 2009

Visitor Mornings
Thursday, Sept. 24th, 2009
Thursday, Oct. 22nd, 2009
9:30am - 11:30am

Booth at Birth Fair
Saturday, Oct. 3rd, 2009
11am - 4pm

Booth at Bayou City
Farmer's Market
Saturday, Oct. 31, 2009

Kindergarten News

The kindergarten acquired some important new equipment - the children love walking on the stilts.



In April, the children prepared and painted eggs that added a beautiful spring flavor to the classroom. An additional craft activity involved making a simple, soft doll with a head scarf. The children really enjoyed making and then playing with these new little friends.

Our May Festival held on May 1st was a joyous celebration of spring! We prepared beautiful flower wreaths for everyone, walked and sang around our May pole, and had a delicious potluck afterwards. Thank you everyone for bringing such

yummy food and for helping with set-up and clean-up afterwards! We welcomed and enjoyed during this occasion the company of two new families interested in the school.

The school year ended on May 28th with a luncheon attended by parents, grandparents, and other relatives. Our many thanks to Ms. Dorothy and to Ms. Javi for providing such a magical year for the children in the kindergarten!

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People

Lisa Rosato is now our part-time administrator for Shining Star School. Lisa brings years of experience in administrative work as well as experience with Waldorf Education from the perspective of a parent and a teacher. We appreciate and welcome her much needed help in this capacity as we strive to expand our school.

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Meet a Board Member

My name is Lisa Rosato, and I have been a member of the Board of Trustees for Waldorf Education for Houston since 2001. I am currently an administrator at Shining Star School. My interest in Waldorf education began in 1992, when I met some parents and educators involved in developing a Waldorf education program in New York.

I began my studies and career with the goal of becoming an art educator, and, as the years progressed, my experiences as a parent and an activist within the Waldorf community led me to understand the importance of a holistic and artistic approach to academics and to the many benefits of the Waldorf educational philosophy. Since 1998, I have been a student of anthroposophy and, whenever possible, an active participant in the Waldorf movement in Houston. It is my privilege to further explore the different areas of Waldorf education where I may be of service.

As a twelve-year manager of my own business, I am no stranger to administrative work. The training in Waldorf early

8am - noon

In the News

This past March, the Alliance for Childhood released a report entitled "*Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School*". It elaborates on the value of play during early childhood as has been demonstrated by many research studies and reports on three new research studies on the state of kindergartens conducted by researchers at U.C.L.A., Long Island University, and Sarah Lawrence College in New York. The researchers found that:

- On a typical day, kindergartners in Los Angeles and New York City spend four to six times as long being instructed and tested in literacy and math (two to three hours per day) as in free play or "choice time" (30 minutes or less).

- Standardized testing and preparation for tests are now a daily activity in most of the kindergartens studied, despite the fact that most uses of such tests with children under age eight are of questionable validity and can lead to harmful labeling.

- Classic play materials like blocks, sand and water tables, and props for dramatic play have largely disappeared from kindergarten classrooms.

- In many kindergartens there is no play time at all. Teachers say the curriculum does not incorporate play, there is no time for it, and many school administrators do not value it.

The report then talks about the implications of the disappearance of play and calls on educators, their professional organizations,

childhood development I received at Sophia's Hearth in Keene, New Hampshire has been invaluable to my work with young children, as well as in my work as a classroom teacher.

I am a mother to two boys: Augustine, age 18, and Benjamin, age 11, both of whom have benefited greatly from their early years in the Waldorf environment. It is my goal to help establish a thriving Waldorf grades school in Houston, and I look forward with joy to furthering our work together!

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School Business

Classes will start on Wednesday, September 9th. The first visitor morning will be offered on Thursday, September 24th. Please invite anyone you think may be interested in Shining Star and remember all enrolled parents are welcome. See the sidebar for more school related calendar dates.

This summer we have been expanding our marketing efforts. We are in the process of updating and improving the school's website and brochure and are looking at new ways to promote the school. We are especially grateful to Anastasia and Ilya Kurland who contributed funds for an ad which will run for three months in the Kid's Directory. We will participate again in the Birth Fair on Saturday, October 3rd, as well as at the Bayou City farmer's market on October 31st. We welcome help with these and other events or opportunities to promote our school.

We seek a new location for the school and will be searching for enough space for growth and expansion. The current families agree that they would like to see the school located in or near Central Houston but have different preferences as to where exactly they would like to see the school. Unfortunately, the school will not be able to be close to everyone's home. We'll see what this search for a facility will bring.

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Fundraising

Our spring fundraiser "Redefining Smart: An Art Auction Benefiting Waldorf Education for Houston and Shining Star School" at the G-Gallery on April 25th was a fun, social event. We sold various pieces of art, tickets to theater and music events as well as other treasures. The event raised over \$2000 for the school. Thanks to Lisa Rosato and Dagmar Truckses for all their hard work soliciting donations and organizing the event, to Bart Boyce and friends who provided musical entertainment, to the Denson Family, and to others who contributed to make this event possible! We will be planning a fundraiser next spring. In the meantime, you can help the school

- by using Good Search for web searches
- by shopping online through Good Shop
- by shopping at various stores with gift cards from Simplified Scrip
- by shopping at Kroger's and Central Market through their giving programs.

More information and instruction on participating in these giving programs can be found on our [website](#).

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and their policymakers to develop a kindergarten curriculum that features a balance of child-initiated play in the presence of engaged teachers and more focused experiential learning guided by teachers. An 8-page summary of this report as well as other information can be found at www.allianceforchildhood.org.